

Reducing Large File Sizes for Blackboard

Large files on Blackboard can cause problems for instructors trying to post them and for students trying to view or download them. Here are a few suggestions for ways to reduce file sizes and to make files more accessible to all of your students as you prepare to post materials on Blackboard.

File Size and Download Time

The file size of your document has an effect on the download time and experience of your students. For example, a student with dial-up would need over 12 minutes to download a 5MB PowerPoint presentation from Blackboard, while a student with a cable modem would need 2 minutes, and a student using a lab on campus would need only 26 seconds.

Recommended File Size

Loyola does not have any official restrictions on file size. However, we do not recommend uploading files over 5MB.

A handy calculator for estimating the download time for different file sizes can be found at: <http://billbrownmusic.com/calc.htm>. Simply enter the size of your document and see how long it will take to download at various speeds.

Plug-ins

In general, no matter what format you end up using, make sure your students have access to the application needed to view/open your files. You can find the most important plug-ins at http://www.luc.edu/its/help_blackboard_plug_ins.shtml. Make this link available to your students from your Blackboard site.

Text Compression Tips

Compress Your PDFs

Saving as PDF (portable document format) can save documents with more advanced formatting, like tables, and preserve the document exactly as you created it, but these documents can still be large.

- Adobe Acrobat Professional – There is a **Reduce file size** option under the **File** menu and a **PDF Optimizer** under the **Advanced** menu.
- PDF995 – This is a free download from <http://www.pdf995.com> and it can reduce PDF file size even more than Adobe Acrobat while retaining the same quality, but the free version requires you to view a sponsor page every time you use the application.

Zip Your Word or RTF Files

You can zip text files to reduce the file size. Remember that zipping PDF, JPG, and MP3 files does not reduce the file size, since these file formats are already compressed. However, text files (Word, RTF) can be reduced with the zip function. You can then upload them to Blackboard as a “packaged file.”

How to Create a Zip File

<http://www.luc.edu/its/pdfs/Ttips-2006-07-27.pdf>

PowerPoint Compression Tips

It is important to keep the size of your PowerPoint presentations under control. Here are some tips to reduce the size of your PowerPoint presentations:

1. **Do a “Save As.”** Go to **File > Save As** and just give your file another name and click **Save**. Your new file will be smaller.
2. **Don’t Save as PowerPoint 95 or Powerpoint 97-2003 & 95.** Make sure your current version of PowerPoint is saving as “Presentation,” not any type with “PowerPoint 95” in the name—these older versions do not support compressed images.
3. **Don’t Allow “Fast Saves.”** To turn this off, go to **Tools > Options** and click the **Save** tab. Clear the **Allow fast saves** check box and click **OK**. After you’ve turned off the **Fast Save**, save your presentation again under a new name.
4. **Convert to PDF.** Saving your PowerPoint as PDF will reduce the size of your presentation significantly. Remember to check the compression settings in your PDF software.
5. **Optimize Your Images.** The best way to reduce the size of the images in PowerPoint is to optimize them before you insert them into your presentation.
 - **Convert all images to JPG or GIF.**
You should make sure all of your images are into JPG format, which is the most compressed image format before inserting them into PowerPoint. You can use any photo-editing program such as Paint or Photoshop. Go to **File > Save As** and select File Format “JPG”.
 - **Resize large images outside of PowerPoint.**
Do not use the picture formatting options in PowerPoint to reduce the size of your image. Resize them in a photo-editing software program outside of PowerPoint.
 - **Do not cut and paste pictures directly into PowerPoint.**
This converts your image into a larger bitmap format. Insert the pictures using the **Insert > Picture > From File** command.
 - **Use low-resolution images.** Save all images you use in PowerPoint at 72ppi (pixels per inch) resolution.
 - **Use the PowerPoint “Compress Images” feature.**
If you already have many uncompressed images in PowerPoint presentations, you can still compress them within PowerPoint by selecting an image in your presentation, then clicking **Format > Picture**, and clicking the **Compress** button on the **Picture** tab. Under **Apply to**, select **All pictures in document** and, under **Change resolution**, select **Web/Screen**.

How to Reduce File Size in PowerPoint

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint/HA011168821033.aspx>

Narration and PowerPoint

If you plan to distribute a narrated presentation by e-mail or Blackboard, you should use a program such as **Impatica**, **Camtasia**, or **Articulate Presenter**, which converts your presentation into a version that is optimized for viewing online. You should NOT upload a narrated PowerPoint presentation that has not been compressed.

List of Tools for Narrating PowerPoint Presentations

http://www.uic.edu/depts/accc/seminars/streamslides/tools_overview.html

Audio

Placing large audio or video files on your Blackboard site can dramatically increase the amount of time it takes for the student to download the full file before being able to listen to it. If you have multiple audio and video files, we suggest posting them on another server and linking them from Blackboard.

If you post audio files on your Blackboard site, make sure they are in a compressed, high-quality format, like MP3. If you are doing your own recording, or posting a WAV file, save it as MP3 in Sound Forge, Garageband or other sound editing software before you upload to Blackboard.

Video

We do not recommend posting video files on your Blackboard site due to their large size. Instead you can provide links to video files on another server or on the Web.

Scanning

If you are scanning documents to post on Blackboard, make sure you review the compression options in the scanning application. Scanned documents are really images, and images always take longer to come up than text. Scan at 150DPI and scan documents or images in black and white rather than in color when possible.

Applications available in the DMR (Digital Media Room) on the second floor of the Granada Center:

Adobe Acrobat Professional
Adobe Photoshop
Impatica (PowerPoint to Web)
Sound Forge
GarageBand

For help with reducing the size of your files, please contact us at blackboard@luc.edu.

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